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ABSTRACT

Problems inherent in international rural development cooperative efforts are those caused by the international mix of participants, difficulties in intercultural communication, and cultural biases of western teaching contents and methods. A 6-month program established in 1982 at the International Agricultural Center at Wageningen, Netherlands, trains young scientists from developed and developing countries for interdisciplinary research in agricultural development and employs many techniques to overcome these problems. The program includes 2 months of resident training in Wageningen, 3 months of field studies by teams in developing countries such as the Philippines, Kenya, Senegal, and Sri Lanka, and a final month-long reporting, analyzing period. The beginning period of team training provides an introduction to intercultural communication, problem solving and decision making techniques, group leadership, and interdisciplinary cooperation. Activities include getting acquainted procedures, programmed case studies of leadership, sharing about intercultural differences and home countries, group problem solving, decision making and discussion techniques, group cooperative exercises ("House-Tree-Dog" and "Broken Squares"), and brainstorming. While the proper combination of training elements is still more art than science, awareness of communication problems and the skill to discuss them before they become insurmountable are principal ingredients of intercultural, interdisciplinary cooperation. (NEC)

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INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AND MULTICULTURAL INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM TRAINING

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Abstract

Effective planning of rural development asks for interdisciplinary cooperation, an undertaking usually fraught with problems. This paper gives an analysis of those problems from the perspective of a social psychologist, and a description of a short training programme for multicultural interdisciplinary teamwork. This line of training is still relatively new, so the nature of this paper will be exploratory.

The training programme was held with groups of mixed cultural origin within the framework of international education, so attention is given to four groups of problems of international education as well: 1) problems caused by the fact that participants come from all parts of the world; 2) problems of intercultural communication; 3) problems with the cultural bias of Western teaching contents; 4) problems with the cultural bias of Western teaching methods. These problems proved to be crucial to the multicultural interdisciplinary teamwork training as well. The second, third and fourth problem may be relevant to any training in interdisciplinary teamwork, because disciplines can be regarded as (sub)cultures.

Introduction

Agricultural research and structural reforms are in themselves not

sufficient for economic development in Third World countries. Only a combination of fysical and social interventions stands a certain chance of success. This issue is the main theme of the VI World Congress for Rural Sociology. It is important, and it is well argued by other speakers here.

So development planning asks for cooperation between scientists of different disciplines. This seems to be a simple and logical solution. In reality however this kind of cooperation proves to be fraught with problems. This paper gives an analysis of those problems from the perspective of a social psychologist, and a description of a training for multicultural interdisciplinary teamwork. This line of training is still relatively new, so the nature of this paper will be exploratory. The theme of this paper definitely deserves attention. Anyone who ever participated in an interdisciplinary team knows how misunderstanding, tension and frustration can cumulate within a few weeks between the team members. Many research programs for development, undertaken by a interdisciplinary team, did not succeed in producing truly integrated results and recommendation, or even fell apart. Farming systems research on the other hand, a most promising new weapon in fighting agricultural under-development, is impossible without a close and effective cooperation between social and fysical scientists. So something should be done, and we think something can be done.

Terminology

Let us first get our terminology straight. What is interdisciplinarity? To determine this, we should define the term 'discipline' first. 'Discipline' means: a branch of science (Van Dusseldorp & Van Staveren, 1980). Science however can ramify in two ways: according to methods (chemistry, sociology) and according to themes (agronomy, mining engineering). The term 'discipline' applies to both types of ramification. When two or more disciplines cooperate, one can distinguish the terms 'multidisciplinary' and 'interdisciplinary'. In *multidisciplinary* activities, persons versed in different disciplines work together without any explicit pattern of interrelationship. Their findings are brought together in a cumulative way. During the studies, the disciplines do not necessarily influence each others work.

Interdisciplinarity, in contrast, requires a purposefull pattern of

interrelation right from the start: one discipline uses, throughout the studies, the findings of the others. This can lead to integrated conclusions and insights of a far better quality than under the cumulative approach (Van Dusseldorp & Van Staveren, 1980). But it can lead to communication problems too, to endless frictions and quarrels.

The International Course for development oriented Research in Agriculture

Since 1982 a new course has been set up at the International Agricultural Center at Wageningen. Its objective is to train young scientists from developed and developing countries for interdisciplinary research for agricultural development. The course is of six months' duration. It is divided into three blocks. At its core is the central block of three months field work. Field studies are carried out by interdisciplinary, multicultural groups of four to five participants in a developing country (The Philippines, Kenya, Senegal, Sri Lanka) under the guidance of an experienced tutor.

The first two months are spend at the course center in Wageningen. The course opens with a workshop on group communication and cooperation. Then time is spend on some extra training in the respective disciplines, key concepts in development thought, comparative analysis of various tropical and subtropical environments, the changing role of agriculture in the light of population growth and pressure on food supplies, methods and techniques of rural information gathering and analysis, and study of rural institutions. Several teaching methods are used, with an emphasis on group work.

After the field survey period the participants return to Wageningen to report on the information that has been collected and analysed, and prepare and discuss case studies of the various groups.

Although the course set-up in itself is interesting and provides a valuable learning experience in interdisciplinary cooperation, among other things, I will not discuss it in detail. For this paper the emphasis is on two subjects:

. problems of international education
. the multicultural interdisciplinary team training, held in the opening week of the ICRA course.

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Problems of international education

In a fifteen year's period of working with multicultural groups in Holland, Germany and the United States, four groups of problems crystallyzed, which are essential for all attempts at international education. They proved to be crucial to the multicultural, interdisciplinary workshop in group communication and cooperation as well. Those problems are:

1. problems, caused by the sheer fact that participants come from all parts of the world;
2. problems of intercultural communication between participants, and between participants and staff;
3. problems with the cultural bias of Western teaching contents;
4. problems with the cultural bias of Western teaching methods.

We will go into these matters one by one, as they are important not only for training non-Western scientists in Western countries, but for all international development work.

1. Participants coming from far away places

The fact that participants come from far away influences the training of multicultural groups strongly, more than one realizes. They fly in from Latin America, Australia, Africa and Asia, and arrive tired, tense and a bit unsure of themselves. No wonder. Usually they flew in the night before and are troubled by 'jet-lag'. For weeks on end they have been arranging their affairs, in their jobs and at home, to allow for their departure. Many of them have lived under stress till the last moment, worrying about their grant, visa, airplane tickets or other vital documents. So much for the tenseness.

What makes them unsure? Surely a long period of training abroad must be exciting? However, the participants hardly could form an idea about life in the Netherlands, about the course and about their adjustment to the situation. They are relatively unprepared, unless they were able to make contact with others who have gone to the same training course. Usually that was impossible.

The contents of the course are somewhat obscure to them. All brochures of educational programs for foreign students I have seen, paint a glowing, but vague picture of the training goals and contents. Detailed descriptions of required advance knowledge, the burden of the

study, the weight of the exams and the educational methods are missing. It would be difficult though to write a good brochure for a target group that is so heterogeneous in academic training, experience and culture. The enrollment forms of the participants show that their own educational goals are stated as vaguely as those in the brochures. Often they are copied literally from the brochures. Many professionals in international education have the impression that participants are sent to a course abroad for all kinds of reasons, but seldom because it is clear that the course will satisfy the needs of the home organization and correspond with the level and training needs of the prospective participants. This does not mean that the aducational programmes are no good in itself, far from it, but they often are not tuned in well to the participants.
I have seen many underqualified and overqualified participants, and students who scarcely spoke or read English, the usual course language. Those facts lower the motivation to learn, which is quite understandable already mixed with tourist and other motivations.

So the participants, in most courses, are not really participating in the beginning of the course. They are tired, tense, unsure, with their thoughts partly on back home problems. They are adjusting badly to the new environment, the climate, the food and the daily schedule. Their English proves to be unsufficient, so they seek support from countrymen. They want to shop around and visit the town, and ask for information on evening entertainment and tourism.

Some remedies - The tiredness and mild desorientation can be taken into account by organizing a light first day programme. Participants can be shown the immediate environments and vital places in the city (shops, banks, post office). The obligatory series of welcome speeches by high-placed officials can be scheduled on the second day. The first day can culminate into an informal welcome dinner and party, to stimulate participants and teaching staff to get to know each other.

To rectify the shortcomings in the preparation of the participants a real study guide would help. It can be tested beforehand on potential participants in developing countries and ex-students. For each country the names and addresses of ex-students can be given, to encourage prospective participants to get into contact with them.

One should be very clear about required advance knowledge and the necessary command of the language of the course. They should be controlled in the home countries by outside experts. In the ICRA course certification is required; in three years only one participant was found whose English was totally inadequate. He was sent home. In longer programmes additional crash courses in language might be necessary for those who slipped through the meshes. Good intercultural communication is not guaranteed by speeking one common language, but without it is a hopeless task.

To tune in to training needs, organizations for international education usually rely on experiences with earlier programmes and post programme evaluation. This could be improved by polling the training needs of future students, organizing them with respect to the ones that are mentioned most and then feeding those back to the interviewees with the request to react one more time (the 'Delphi-method'). A second improvement is a halfstructured educational programme, with room for specific and unforeseen training needs of the students. The ICRA course is organized in such a flexible way.

Another problem, connected with the fact that the participants come from far away countries, is indicated in the literature as *'culture shock'* (Oberg, 1978): the professional illness of people who are transplanted suddenly from one culture to the next, and lose all well known points of contact. As the symptoms and stages of 'culture shock' probably are known by this audience, I will give some short comments only.
Many international educational programmes are shorter than a year. Even in the longer programmes the contact with the host culture is quite limited. The culture they have to live with is in fact the cultural mix which results from the cultural clash of the host institution and the multicultural student body. The outcome will be dominated by the host institution, who provides food and lodging and sets academic standards. In most cases those standards are high and have to be met in a relatively short time, forcing the students to work longer hours than they have ever done. All these factors contribute to the observation, that a large proportion of the international students does not seem to progress beyond phase two of the 'w-curve' of culture shock ('frustration and anger') because of the limited duration of their stay, work pressure and the confusing nature of the cultural mix in which they have to live (figure 1).

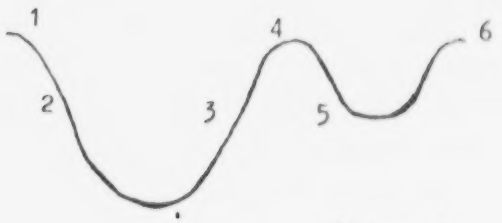

figure 1

The six phases of culture shock:

1. elation
2. frustration and anger
3. revival and perseverance
4. empathy and appreciation
5. and 6. reentry crisis

Phase 2 is called 'frustration and anger', because one runs into minor and major problems constantly. The rage expresses itself in grousing about the guest country (and/or guest institution), together with fellow sufferers, whereby all frustrations are turned into negative stereotypes about the receiving country (and/or institution) and its inhabitants. This is a critical phase. He who gets stuck in it will behave more and more unadjusted and will never learn to understand the new country. Some get literally homesick and have to be returned quickly .... The number of untimely returns of participants in international educational programmes is unknown. Psychosomatic illnesses occur frequently however in the course of longer programmes. I am familiar with a number of cases, in which psychiatric help was needed. Often it is hard to decide whether the participants were overloaded with work, suffered from culture shock, or both. More important even might be, that participants quite often encounter a loss of prestige, socially and professionally, especially if they are well respected people back home and just students, frequently with study problems, in the guest country. This kind of *roleshock* is hard to digest! The literature on roleshock suggests, that it is even harder to overcome than culture shock.

Some remedies - Training in intercultural communication skills appears to help against culture shock. It should be combined with a thorough training in the host language, in nonverbal communication, in norms, values and practical matters of the host country. Personal support after arrival abroad is indispensible.

Often an artificial and mild cultural shock, or a series of smaller shocks, are built into the preparation programme. It is useful to give trainees information about the process of culture shock and how to overcome the downward movement of the second phase. Essential to this is to avoid isolation with co-nationals and to establish friendships with students from other countries and inhabitants of the host country. The IAC

successfully creates conditions for the first factor mentioned. It is more difficult to stimulate contacts with the inhabitants from the host country. Some international educational institutions employ, with varying success, a system of so called 'contact families'.

There is no simple antidote against roleshock. The teaching staff should be well aware of this phenomenon and avoid any behaviour, which aggravates the loss of prestige of the participants. Quite often lecturers are quite naïve about the effects of their actions.

2. Problems of intercultural communication

A second major point for attention in working with international groups are the intercultural communication problems between the participants and between teaching staff and participants. Communication between people is a hazardous process, let alone intercultural communication, especially between people who do not realize how much they are tied to their culture and how ethnocentric they think, feel, judge and act. Cultural relativism can only be attained under certain favorable conditions by a long and deep immersion in a foreign culture.

Intercultural communication can be very complicated. Just to *understand* one another in a multicultural group is quite a job. Everyone speaks English, more or less, but with strongly varying accents. The accent of Dutch lecturers who try to speak English often is one of the worst. Personally I need a day or two to get used again to the staccato English of people from India. But even if we all would speak the same kind of English, there would be countless misunderstandings. "Meanings are not in words, but in people" (Berlo, 1971), and a great number of meanings cannot be translated into English. Take for example the Japanese forms of address, that reflect the degree of closeness, the relative status of the interactants, the formality of the situation, ages and gender of the interactants, and geographical origin and professional groups. This results into dozens of alternatives for "you" and "I", as the English only know those two words. Just realize the huge differences between the social realities of Japanese and English!

Nonverbal communication strongly differs with culture. It is the most important part of our communication, carrying estimately 70% of all information. Tone of voice, mimics, gestures, posture, interpersonal distance, touch behaviour, the use of time and of space are essential for

communication, but hard to understand for foreigners. As nonverbal communication is mainly unconscious behaviour, with strong emotional connotations, and as it is a language without grammar and dictionary, it is very hard to learn to behave nonverbally correct in a different culture.

Behaviour- and role patterns too are essential for intercultural communication: they are systems of shared expectations *within a culture* about desired behaviour in certain situations. Underneath all these aspects of communication, as carriers of the culture, lay systems of values, unique to each culture (Condon and Yousef, 1975). These differences can be as many barriers to effective intercultural communication. In interdisciplinary groups from different cultures one has to take into account that *each discipline is a subculture on its own* too, with its own professional jargon, its own values and outlook on reality. This is of special interest for interdisciplinary programmes like the ICRA course.

Some remedies - A first condition for the teacher is that he can adjust his or her owns norms, values and communication habits, so that attention to and empathy for others becomes possible. Knowledge of the cultures of the participants, preferably first hand knowledge, is a second condition. Next it is of vital importance to take people seriously, to be friendly and receptive to signals of confusion and tension. One should persistently assume, that the other party is as sane as you are. This sounds easier than it is.

Programme wise it pays to follow up a light first day programme with a three (or more) day *workshop in intercultural communication and cooperation*, as is done at the International Agricultural Center in Wageningen. The contents of this workshop will be described in the second part of this paper.

3. Problems with the cultural bias of Western teaching contents.

Ten, fifteen years ago nobody considered it a problem that Westerners should teach less developed nations. Why should we not share our insights? The mere fact that they come to *us* for education illustrates our lead in knowledge in a number of fields, doesn't it?

For some time though the insight is seeping through that our surplus in knowledge and technical solutions is often either irrelevant for the most pressing problems in the Third World, or would accelerate a develop-

ment after the Western model. This kind of development would bring unwanted consequences for the environment, the natural resources and the social system. Now we are interested, for example, in anti-erosion schemes, small scale technology and farmer systems research.

So far about the *practical* usefullness or unusefullness of our knowledge. Less is known about its *cultural bias*. I will restrict myself therefore to subjects with which I am familiar. If, for example, I would want to teach group dynamics to an international group, I would skate on thin ice. Not only would I build on mere Western research and would I run the risk of starting from principles that are valid only for groups in the West, but I would too come to valuebound statements that would seem ridiculous to someone from Japan, where group membership means something else altogether. Likewise our insights on organization development will not work in Japan, because we start from suppositions about work motivation and relationships that are Western. The *permissibility of the use of knowledge* is culture bound too, as becomes evident in very strict Protestant religious groups in Holland, where religious subculture forbids any medical assistance, as this is supposed to be against God's will.

Some remedies - I do not argue for hiding insights or fields of knowledge because of their Western origin, but I strongly suggest to test them on feasability and acceptability against the cultures of the participants. This testing could be done before the educational programme starts, by using the experiences of international consultants. Furthermore, the insights and experiences of the participants *themselves* should be used in such a way during the programme, that the cultural bias of Western teaching contents is counteracted. That can be done by problem solving group discussions about cases brought in by the participants, and by stimulating mutual exchange of information between participants coming from regions with comparable problems and climatological and living circumstances. For that matter it would be logical to teach courses with this approach in the Third World countries themselves. Both approaches are used by the International Agricultural Center.

Conducting educational programmes in the countries of the participants might be a good remedy, insofar as the teaching staff is not educated only with Western insights and theories.

Knowledge that is culturally unbiased does not exist. Teachers who agree with this point of view would therefore have to know their own sys-

system of values and those of their students as well. At least they would need to be interested in getting acquainted with it. Group discussions and intensive personal contact could improve multicultural education greatly in this respect.

4. Problems with the cultural bias of Western teaching methods

We seldom stop at the question how much we have *learned to learn in a certain way*. Most of us grew up in an era in which teaching was done by someone in front of a classroom. When the teacher lectured one listened and took notes. Next one memorized the notes, and then one 'owned' some knowledge. The didactic revolution of the past twenty years produced other, equally dogmatically practised insights like: learning-by-doing, learning-by-discovery, project learning and learning in discussion groups. The oldest, most fundamental, way of learning by which we all learned much and fast when we were very small - learning by imitation - cannot be found in the list of pedagogically approved methods. Isn't that strange? Pedagogues and psychologists do lots of research about the effectiveness of certain teaching methods for certain content matter, but they are maybe too culturally biased to research didactic methods that are out of fashion, or to give attention to the possibility that habituation to a certain way of learning could be an important factor. We dó realize however that there are individual differences in learning style. Some people take in learning material better when they see it, as others are oriented more to what they hear.

Kolb (1974) discovered that there are four learning styles: 1) observation and reflection, 2) abstract conceptualization, 3) testing implications of concepts in new situations and 4) concrete experience. Together they form in theory a perfect and complete learning cycle. But actually each of these four components is preferred *in itself* by categories of persons. The learning styles correlate to a great extent with the professional group to which one belongs. A mathematician will emphasize abstract conceptualization, an artist will stress concrete experience. Managers will want to put their ideas into practice, as biologists will give priority to observation and reflection.

When habituation to a learning style counts, and when people differ too in the learning style that suits them best, why should we not take into account the possibility that people in other cultures learn as effectively in other ways? Hall (1973) gives examples of the stubbornness

of American teachers abroad, who persist - with the best of intentions - in their own culturally biased ways of teaching. I remember my amazement when two Asians in an intercultural communication workshop in which we practised communication in all possible manners just sat and wrote. They said that they learned most that way. Maybe they were right; I do not know yet. But there should be room for doubt with respect to the unproven superiority of our teaching methods. And the young man from Malaysia, who did not say one word in a number of group discussions but listened very attentively, disquieted me so much that I asked him what was wrong. He told me it was improper for him to speak up in the presence of older and wiser men. He said he enjoyed himself though and learned a lot of the sessions. Was he wright or wrong? Long time ago I participated in an international communication workshop in which the leader, despite the grumbling of most of the participants, persisted in the role of the classical sensitivity-trainer. All initiatives should come from group members; he refused flatly to play the schoolmaster. Until the group took the initiative to get rid of him ....

Some remedies - He who works with multicultural groups has to put aside his own, often firmly rooted preferences for a certain style of teaching. In the first place because that style is effective only for some of the participants, in the second place because it will not be acceptable in some cultures. The best solution for teaching a multicultural group might be to offer a broad spectre of teaching methods: verbal instruction, self study, group discussions, experiential methods, skill practice, demonstrations, case studies, formal lectures, alternately used and supported by appropriate audiovisual aids. This mixture can be tried out until it becomes clear which part of this range of methods is most effective for this specific multicultural group, with these specific individuals.

The multicultural interdisciplinary team training

The problem of interdisciplinarity

What is it that makes interdisciplinary teamwork so hard to attain? Several factors can be mentioned.

The *structure of the academic educational system* comes to mind as the first factor. Omniscient scholars, like Da Vinci, disappeared with the phenomenal growth and diversification of science. Each science became a specialization and subsequently branched out in many subspecialties. Each has its own field of knowledge, its own methods of research, its own laws and ways of reasoning, its great men, its own jargon, its identity. In other words: every scientific specialization forms a definite *subculture*.

More often than not, scientists have the weirdest prejudices against colleagues with a different background. The schism between natural and social sciences is a clear example. The void between adjoining sciences, f.e. sociology and psychology, sometimes is even larger because of territorial conflicts. Doing research and field work in an interdisciplinary project during the practical period in academic study should help. However, in the Netherlands and most other countries this kind of project study, embedded in the regular academic programme, is still too new to be sure of positive effects.

The second factor might be that *scientists seem to be inclined to identify their ego with their science*. Allowing room for other sciences or admit shortcomings in their own causes agony. If you do not like this, you might say: "In our view someone shelters behind his own discipline if he does not want to cooperate or cannot open his mind to new ideas" (Mettrick, 1984).

The third factor is that *food problems* in developing countries, with their large numbers of small farmers, *seem to point clearly to agricultural solutions*, so that other kinds of knowledge needed to overcome the problems, were overlooked for a long period of time. Donor and receiver institutions still are not adjusted to working with really interdisciplinary teams. They still hesitate to add sociologists, psychologists and extension specialists to a group of mixed agricultural specialists.

A quick analysis reveals that interdisciplinary teams ofter fall apart from a number of reasons. Most prominent are: a) not being able to understand the specific logic, language and importance of other sciences; b) the unwillingness of scientists to be part of a larger whole, to be only partially important; c) the 'submarine' or 'tanker effect': quarrels or frictions in a team caused by being locked up together too close for comfort in an uncomfortable strane environment; d) bad team leadership.

Who disciplines the disciplines then? In the ICRA course we tried.

Goals and outline of the multicultural interdisciplinary team training

In a way the whole ICRA course is one long learning experience in working together closely with others from different disciplines and cultures. The real training in interdisciplinarity even can be said to begin once the teams are doing their research in the field. So the multicultural interdisciplinary team training (from now on to be called MITT) should be seen as preparation only: a modest enterprise. Officially it was just called simply 'communication training', to avoid overly high expectations from the participants. The MITT had a duration of two and a halve day: two days successively with the whole group of (15) participants, and one halve day for each of the three field groups of 5 participants.

'Modest enterprise' or not, this workshop had to fulfill a lot of functions. In the first place we had to make sure that we contributed positively to the solution of the four groups of problems, described in the first part of this paper. In the second place the workshop should provide an introduction for the participants to a number of subjects: 1) intercultural communication, 2) problem solving and decision making techniques, 3) group leadership, 4) interdisciplinary cooperation. A fifth goal: 'awareness of group processes and the skill of discussing them', can be seen as a condition for realizing the other four objectives.

The second and third subject need some explanation. As the ICRA course itself and the field work rests heavily on group work, and as we knew from experience that most of the participants lack all training in this area and might even be culturally and professionally aversive to this subject, these two subjects should get extra attention. After several try-outs in earlier programmes it was decided to work for two days with the plenary group of fifteen participants, to introduce them to the subjects mentioned in a more general way. Several weeks later we worked separately with the three field groups, to see how they applied their insights on intercultural interdisciplinary team work in reality. In doing this we followed an important rule of thumb for communication skills training: 'Progress from relatively impersonal, group oriented feedback to more personal and probably more challenging feedback' (Oomkes, 1976).

The four problems of international education and the workshop

We will go into these four problems as far as they are directly relevant to the MITT. The second problem: intercultural communication, will be dealt with in the description of the workshop.

1. Participants coming from far away places - The tiredness of the participants is taken into account by a relatively light programme of the opening day of the course, followed by several days with no more than two to three lectures. The tenseness by that time is hardly noticeable. They are however completely unprepared for the workshop. It was announced in the programme as 'Communication training', that is all. Most participants have vague or false notions about this subject, or the reasons for it's presence in the programme. So we do our best to be explicit about goals and methods of the workshop and of every single session. We encourage questions, and avoid excercizing pressure on participants who are hesitant to take an active role in the workshop. As for proficiency in the English language: special care is given to less fluent speakers. The subject of culture shock, the phases and possible remedies are brought to the attention of the students. The workshop itself, with its emphasis on intercultural communication and quality of 'breaking the ice' between the participants, helps to alleviate culture shock.

3. The cultural bias of Western teaching contents - Almost anything that is taught on the subjects of group work and communication in Europe and the United States is based on Western theory and research. Even the rapidly growing amount of knowledge on intercultural communication is predominantly Western. Many experiences in earlier communication workshops learned us enough about cultural differences in communication habits, to present our insights either with a firm dose of cultural relativism or to keep quiet and ask for the insights of the participants.

4. The cultural bias of Western teaching methods - Communication skills workshops in the West happen to be very much based on the principles of learning by doing, direct and unambiguous feedback and a small social distance between the workshopleader and the participants. In most non-Western cultures these practices are found strange or disturbing. So our behaviour as workshopleaders is friendly, less confronting and more

formal than in Dutch workshops. No straight 'feedback sessions', or attempts to make the group completely selfresponsible from the start. No communication excercises without a thorough explanation of why and how, and often preceeded by a demonstration by us. Special care is given to offer the kind of feedback to the participants, which does not cause loss of face. Videorecordings prove to be very useful in this respect. Several times during the workshop evaluations on the effectivity of our teaching methods are held. An extra problem in working with participants from the Far East is then to phrase evaluative questions in such a way, that they consider it proper to offer suggestions, and to understand the polite understatements into which these suggestions are worded ...

The programme of the MITT

Generally speaking, communication workshops should start with getting acquainted and other group activities, that are attractive, amusing, varied, non threatening and conducive to the building of team spirit. At the same time those activities should contribute to the stated goal(s) of the workshop. So we started with a getting acquainted procedure, followed by a *programmed case study on leadership*, designed to make clear the differences in opinions on leadership behaviour between the participants, with an emphasis on the cultural origins of those differences. This case study was discussed in culturally heterogeneous triads, which procedure offered three extra advantages. One: people who do not know each other well, feel more at ease in very small groups. Two: if a task is given to a very small group, all members have to contribute. Three: we broke up the already formed cliques of co-nationals. This is essential in every educational programme that stresses intercultural cooperation and understanding.

The afternoon of the first day again was spent on learning about *intercultural differences*. To drive away post-lunch drowsiness, we started with forming culturally heterogeneous pairs of people who had had no experience with each others culture. We invited them to tell each other as much as they knew *about each other's country*, taking turns. We asked them not to interrupt or correct the other person's story, before he or she was finished. No doubt many rough stereotypes were exchanged and corrected. The second assignment was to tell each other about the thing one liked best and the thing one disliked most in one's own culture. The whole excercise

lasted only 40 minutes, but it had definite effects. Some cultural barriers were removed, people knew each other better, and became somewhat more aware of the cultural 'bubble' in which everyone lives. In a short plenary meeting experiences with this exercise were exchanged and related to theory about cultural stereotyping and ethnocentrism.

For the next exercise we divided the group in two culturally heterogeneous groups of eight people. We estimated most participants to be enough at ease by then to function in a somewhat larger group. Again the exercise aimed at cultural differences, but on a deeper level: *norms and values* on friendship, love, fidelity, premarital sex, responsibility, the role of men and women and the role of the elderly (Pfeiffer & Jones, 1974). At the same time it was an exercise in *group problem solving, decision making and discussion techniques*. The exercise starts with the group leader telling a dramatic story in which five persons play a role: a sailor, a young girl, her fiancee, the fiancee's best friend and an old man. The assignment was to judge each of these persons morally and to agree as a group on a ranking order in which these five persons should be placed. In essence, this is an impossible task, because one can hardly agree when deep seated feelings are concerned. Two participants were asked to be observers, using a checklist with items relating to group problem solving, decision making and discussion techniques. Twice during their discussion the others got the opportunity to exchange ideas about the way they tackled their assignment in five minute breaks. Videorecordings were made, and after observers and others had given their views, analysed at length. Everyone was encouraged to tell about his or her values on the items mentioned above, which led to a somewhat greater intercultural understanding. The discussion was linked to a small lecture about the coherence of value systems, using Kluckhohns scheme of values in the version, modified by Condon and Yousef (1975).

In this phase of the workshop the participants, helped by video playback, started to give comments on each other's behaviour and the behaviour of the group as a whole. As this is uncommon in many non-Western cultures, especially Asian, some middle course between Western bluntness and Asian polite roundabouts has to be hit upon. Quite often each training group invents its own jokes, with which behaviour can be criticised without causing loss of face for the adressed person. The workshopleader should try to encourage this form of nonagressive humor, and give special care to participants who have trouble in expressing or receiving feedback. In

follow-ups we informally executed after the three earlier ICRA courses, these jokes were seen as vitally important by the participants, because they made it possible to give feedback and ease the tension at the same time.

The morning of the second day was devoted to *group cooperation*. To make a light but interesting start, we opened up with a playful cooperation exercise, called 'House-tree-dog' (Antons, 1974). Divided in culturally heterogeneous pairs, the participants together had to draw a house, a tree and a dog, holding one pencil and using one sheet of paper. They were not allowed to talk, but one could here giggling everywhere. You should try this one out! It is not easy, but great fun. When the drawings were completed, an exhibition was made on the wall and the best drawing was chosen. The drawings clearly showed the quality of cooperation within the pairs. In the shapes of the house and the tree sometimes even was visible which culture dominated in those parts of the drawing. The plenary analysis was focused on: 1) taking the lead and following, and flexibility in this respect, and on 2) the necessity of good (nonverbal) communication. Some attention was given to culturally defined norms about touching and interpersonal distance.

The next exercise was a classical one: 'Broken Squares' (Nylen, Mitchell & Stout, 1967). It is a problem solving game, designed to elucidate the principles of group cooperation and the importance of accepting the information and expertise of others. Highly relevant themes for this workshop! In the discussion afterwards the experiences of the participants were coupled to some theory on group cooperation and information flow.

The afternoon of the second day the group was split up in two subgroups, each one heterogeneous with respect to the disciplines of the participants. Using the technique of 'brainstorming', we let the groups make a checklist of group behaviours and procedures conducive to *interdisciplinary group cooperation*. This checklist next was used by two observers in each group. The others took part in a highly involving exercise in *group problem solving and decision making*, called 'Wilderness exercise' (origin unknown). In this exercise it is extremely important to have full cooperation of all group members, to gather all relevant ideas and to judge the *expertise* of group members, as they are contributing to the solution of a series of problems. A rotating chairperson was used, with three chairpersons acting for fifteen minutes. After each of these fifteen minutes' periods there was a ten minute

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break to discuss the actions of the chairman or -woman and to ask the observers for their comments. Everything was recorded on videotape, to be analysed at length afterwards. This last exercise combined all the goals of the workshop. The emphasis on the skills of chairmanship certainly seemed to be necessary, as much of the ICRA course and of the work in the field is done in self-managing groups. This part of the workshop was concluded with a plenary evaluation.

About one month later we met the participants again. The group now was split up into three multidisciplinary subgroups, that were to be sent out in this composition to do integrated research. In the weeks gone by they had been lectured to on a number of subjects (see p. 2). They had grown used somewhat to the way other disciplines think, not in the least by the many group discussions and other cooperative efforts. We observed the three groups for half a day to see how they were getting along. Then we went to work with each of them for half a day on the subjects of intercultural communication, problem solving and decision making techniques, group leadership and interdisciplinary cooperation. No games this time. The groups were engaged in the same kind of work as they were expected to do in their field study: they had to complete a research report.

The strategy we used was about the same as the one employed in the last exercise in the two day workshop: one participant and one of us as observers, a rotating chairperson and a number of ten minutes breaks to give feedback. As we had expected, the groups functioned only moderately well. Part of what they had learned during the two day workshop, was forgotten or simply not put into practice. This can be ascribed to a combination of factors.

Number one is the relatively short duration of the first, two day part of the MITT, into which too many subjects had to be treated. A second factor is the time lag since those first two days. The effects of social skill training tend to diminish over time, when no extra training or reinforcement is given. Of importance too is the time pressure which the participants felt when they were completing their research reports. Time pressure often causes miscommunication and a clumsy use of group techniques and procedures, just when one needs efficiency and effectivity. Another factor is the different task they were engaged in. In the workshop the assignments were stimulating, sometimes funny and never extremely lengthy or tiring. Collectively producing a research report on the other hand can be a rather frustrating task

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As a last factor the different group composition must be mentioned. The ICRA staff had given much thought to the composition of the three teams. Each team should have a certain combination of disciplines, a certain balance between the number of men and women in the team and a certain balance between the members with respect to character traits (f.e. dominance) and cognitive abilities. A complicating factor was the principle that no team member should be a native of the country where the field work was to be done. It even was considered better that everyone should go to a continent that was new to him or her. Within those limits, the preference of the participants for the site of the field work was taken into account too. The result of these complex considerations was this time, to our opinion, not optimal: one team was well balanced, the second combined too many dominant people and the third showed a lack of leadership qualities. The ICRA staff was not unaware of this, but saw no alternatives. Our half day training was not sufficient to remedy the imbalance in the composition of the teams.

Looking back, after the completion of the field workd, the writing of the research reports and the final evaluation with the participants, some conclusions can be drawn. The course as a whole proved to have had satisfying results again and no one dropped out. Cooperation problems could be solved one way or another, although this sometimes took a lot of energy. The research reports were adequate; however, the best research was done by the one well balanced group. Most participants said, that more training should be given to the teams at the moment they were formed. We agree. The participants by that time showed awareness of the way they functioned. They were well motivated to learn how to overcome the problems in their teams. They wanted straight feedback and advice and some more time to practice under our supervision. Our advice to the ICRA staff is threefold:

1. - to lengthen the MITT: too many goals were crammed in too short a training;
2. - to have a one week period, into which several team combinations are tried out, to ensure three well balanced teams;
3. - to have a two day training for the resulting teams, with a heavy emphasis on techniques of interdisciplinary group cooperation.

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Conclusions

International education faces four main groups of problems, which can be solved when given special attention. Interdisciplinary multicultural team training is a much younger venture, but it develops quickly. Our experience shows that it can be valuable for research groups of very mixed composition. The guidelines for international education again proved to be quite useful. Still the proper combination of training elements, which should be different for each and every training group, is more art than science. To our knowledge really thorough evaluation research is not done yet. It would be extremely interesting, for example, to learn more about ways in which understanding of and respect for other sciences can be taught. Awareness of communication problems and the skill to discuss them before they become unsurmountable, prove to principal ingredients of intercultural, interdisciplinary cooperation.

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